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# TOUCHET RIVER AREA (WASHINGTON). PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC RECONNAISSANCE AND ESTIMATE OF GROWTH, 1960-2010

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October 1961

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Prepared by: Economic Studies Group
WS&PC Program, Pacific Northwest

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# PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC RECONNAISSANCE AND ESTIMATE OF GROWTH, 1960-2010

I. Introduction.

- A. Purpose of This Analysis.
- B. Definition of Area.
- C. Study Period.
- D. Limitations of Analysis.

II. Present Economic Development.

- A. Population.
- B. Industrial Pattern.

III. Estimated Growth.

- A. Possibilities for Growth.
- B. Estimate of Future Growth.

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PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC RECONNAISSANCE AND ESTIMATE OF GROWTH, 1960-2010

## I. Introduction.

### A. Purpose of Analysis.

This analysis is intended to provide a preliminary estimate of the economic potentials and anticipated growth of the subject area.

### B. Definition of Area.

The Touchet River Area is in southeast Washington. It includes a major part of Columbia County and a broad corridor, adjoining the Touchet River and the Walla Walla River below its juncture with the Touchet River, through Walla Walla County. For the purposes of this preliminary estimate, it has been approximately defined by Census Divisions as shown in Table II-A-1. Excluded from the projections are the areas on the shores of the Columbia River at the mouth of the Walla Walla River.

### C. Study Period.

The study period is the 50-year period ending in 2010. The year 1980 is taken as an interim point.

### D. Limitations of Analysis.

This analysis is intended only as an initial estimate of the outlook of the Touchet River Area, based upon broad trends. Subsequently, in connection with the development of the Columbia River Basin Project for Water Supply and Water Quality Management, additional and more detailed economic analysis will be considered. Such an analysis would include studies of growth potential on an industry-by-industry basis. At that time, this preliminary estimate will be reviewed and revised if necessary.

## II. Present Economic Development.

### A. Population.

The Touchet River Area contained about 8,000 persons in 1960. This represented a loss of more than 2 percent in the decade 1950-1960. This population was about evenly distributed between the Columbia County and Walla Walla County portions of the area. The largest

community was Dayton with a population of about 3,000 persons. The population of the area and its distribution for both 1950 and 1960 is shown in Table II-A-1.

Table II-A-1
POPULATION IN TOUCHET RIVER AREA, 1950 AND 1960

| | Number of Inhabitants | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1950 | 1960 |
| Columbia County: | | |
| Division 1 ..... | 1372 | 1213 |
| Dayton City ..... | 2979 | 2913 |
| Division 3 ..... | 244 | 221 |
| Upper Touchet River ..... | 4595 | 4347 |
| Walla Walla County: | | |
| Prescott Town (in Div. 1) ..... | 244 | 269 |
| Half of Remainder of Div. 1 ... | 331 | 331 |
| Half of Division 2 ..... | 88 | 76 |
| Half of Division 3 ..... | 442 | 543 |
| Division 4 ..... | 804 | 779 |
| Half of Division 5 ..... | 260 | 253 |
| Waitsburg City (in Div. 6) .... | 1015 | 1010 |
| Half of Remainder of Div. 6 ... | 450 | 432 |
| Lower Touchet River ..... | 3634 | 3693 |
| Total Study Area ..... | 8229 | 8040 |
| Decrease in Population ..... | 189 | |
| Decrease as % of 1950 ..... | 2.3% | |

Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1960. (Final Report PC(1)-49A)

The population of the Study Area is compared to certain other areas in Table II-A-2. It should be noted that the population trend of the Study Area is considerably different from the State and the Nation. The growth of Walla Walla County is mainly attributed to population increases in Walla Walla City and its suburbs.

Table II-A-2
POPULATION GROWTH OF TOUCHET RIVER AREA
COMPARED TO SELECTED AREAS

| | Number of Inhabitants 1950 | 1960 | Percent Change 1950 to 1960 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Columbia County | 4,860 | 4,569 | -6.0% |
| Upper Touchet River Area | 4,595 | 4,347 | -5.4% |
| Upper River Area as Percent of County | (94.5%) | (95.0%) | --- |
| Walla Walla County | 40,135 | 42,195 | 5.1% |
| Lower Touchet River Area | 3,634 | 3,693 | 1.7% |
| Lower River Area as Percent of County | (9.0%) | (8.7%) | --- |
| Washington State | 2,378,963 | 2,853,214 | 19.9% |
| Touchet River Area | 8,229 | 8,040 | -2.3% |
| Touchet River Area as Percent of State | (0.35%) | (0.28%) | --- |
| United States | 151,325,793 | 179,323,175 | 18.5% |

Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1960

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B. Industrial Pattern.

1. General.

For the purpose of this estimate, it is considered reasonable to examine the industrial pattern of Columbia County and to assume that it is representative of the portion of the Walla Walla County area which is included in the Study Area.

The 1950 distribution of employment in Columbia County is shown in Table II-B-1. This table illustrates the importance of agriculture as a major basic industry in the area. This importance is emphasized even more by analyzing the composition of the manufacturing employment. The major component of manufacturing employment is due to food processing industries.

Table II-B-1
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT
IN COLUMBIA COUNTY, WASHINGTON, IN 1950

| | Employed Persons | |
|---|---|---|
| | Number | % of Total |
| Agriculture ..... | 644 | 36.8 |
| Manufacturing ..... | 204 | 11.7 |
| Retail Trade ..... | 249 | 14.3 |
| Other (mainly service industries) .. | 652 | 37.2 |
| Total ..... | 1,749 | 100.0 |

Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1950.

A comparison of 1950 Census of Population data with the 1959 Census of Agriculture and with 1960 "Covered Employment" data from the Washington State Department of Employment Security indicates that the 1950 pattern is still substantially correct for the Study Area. Unfortunately, the "economic characteristics" sections of the 1960 Census of Population have not yet been made available.

2. Manufacturing.

The main manufacturing plants on the Touchet River are at Dayton and Waitsburg. They are both owned by the Green Giant Company and are briefly described in the following tabulation[1/]:

| Location: | Dayton | Waitsburg |
|---|---|---|
| Product: | Canned peas, asparagus | Canned peas |
| Average employment: | 100-249 | 20-49 |
| Peak employment: | 1,000-2,499 | 250-449 |

The output from these two plants has been estimated to be about 1-3/4 million cases of peas and 180,000 cases of asparagus annually. This estimate is based on a 1959 production statistic for the company's Blue Mountain Division, proportioned in accordance with employment.

1/ Data are from the "1961 Directory of Washington State Manufacturers," Washington State Department of Commerce and Economic Development.

From an examination of Columbia County "Covered Employment" in nondurable goods manufacturing for 1960, it appears that the peak of canning operations occurs during May, June and July. The employment in this category during these months was four times greater than during the remaining months of the year.

3. Agriculture.

Using as a guide for the Study Area the Columbia County statistics from the 1959 Census of Agriculture, it is seen that the number of farms have been decreasing, but their average size has been increasing since 1954. About three-fourths of the cropland harvested was in grain crop production, with green peas and asparagus accounting for the majority of the remaining cropland harvested.

Irrigation is practiced on a relatively small amount of the area's land. Columbia County in 1959 reported 3,343 acres irrigated, compared to 114,656 cropland acres harvested. Walla Walla County had considerably more irrigation (37,296 acres irrigation and 279,538 acres of cropland harvested) but much of this is outside the Study Area. The Dayton Project, as described in the 1957 report of the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, would have 9,930 acres under irrigation, of which 1,350 are presently irrigated, but have an inadequate water supply.

## III. Estimated Growth.

### A. Possibilities for Growth.

Three possibilities for growth in the Study Area can be predicted at this time. They are, (1) a moderate increase in service industries due to automobile traffic on the proposed Lolo Pass Highway, (2) a possible increase in population merely due to the pressure from other areas, and (3) a moderate increase in population and service industries due to the proposed Dayton Project. This project would not only increase the value of farm output, but would have some other income-generating aspects through the use of the proposed reservoir for its various multiple purposes.

### B. Estimate of Future Growth.

For the purposes of this study, the maximum estimate of future population growth is based on an assumed growth rate of 0.5 percent a year. This is the same annual rate as Walla Walla County experienced in the 1950-1960 decade, but it is only about a fourth as large a rate

as the State's growth during the past decade. As a minimum estimate of population growth, it is assumed that no change will occur. This is in contrast to the past decade during which there was a net loss. Based on these growth rates, the number of inhabitants in the Study Area is estimated to increase as shown in Table III-B-1. The distribution of the increase is expected to remain about the same as at present, with 50 percent rural and 50 percent in urban places.

Table III-B-1
ESTIMATE OF FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH
IN TOUCHET RIVER AREA, 1960 TO 1980-2010

| | Number of Inhabitants | |
|---|---|---|
| | Maximum | Minimum |
| 1960 . . . . . | 8,040 | 8,040 |
| Annual Growth Rate . . | 0.5% | None |
| 1980 . . . . . | 8,900 | 8,040 |
| 2010 . . . . . | 10,300 | 8,040 |

It is not deemed reasonable under the conditions of this study to forecast in greater detail the increases in industrial or commercial development. No specific large industrial expansion is foreseen. The growth of existing industry and commerce is expected generally to keep pace with the forecast for population growth.